



Dublin Grand Opera Society

WILLIAM O'KELLY

MEMORIAL CONCERT

1986



THE
DUBLIN GRAND OPERA SOCIETY
Presents the
William O'Kelly
Memorial Concert

with
THE DGOS CHORUS
(under the direction of Phillip Gilbert)

SOLOISTS

Catherine Smith
Soprano

Paul Kelly
Tenor

Mary Clarke
Soprano

Jack O'Kelly
Baritone

Marie Walsh
Mezzo

Andrew Murphy
Bass

ACCOMPANISTS

Jeannie Reddin, Ethna Tinney, James Vaughan

NATIONAL CONCERT HALL
Sunday September 7th 1986 at 8 p.m.

PART I

VERDI — Nabucco Act I

Full Chorus — *Gli arredi festivi*

Verdi's first success which made him immediately popular and spread his name throughout Italy was *Nabucco* which was first performed in 1842 in La Scala, Milan. The story, which tells of the fortune of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity appealed to Verdi's patriotic feelings. He longed for the liberation and unification of Italy, the greater part of which was then governed by Austria. The curtain rises on the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem with the Hebrews bewailing their defeat at the hands of Nabucco, King of Babylon, and invoking the help of the Lord, Jehovah.

J. STRAUSS — Die Fledermaus

Catherine Smith — *Csárdás — Klänge der Heimat*

The conclusive break-through for Viennese operetta with its recognition as an original, independent genre, came in 1874 with the first performance of *Die Fledermaus* which was instantaneously appreciated and acclaimed. This heralded the arrival of the Viennese operetta as an art-form. Strauss was inspired to write in only 43 days the score which captures not only the atmosphere of giddy hedonism in contemporary society but an excellently drawn gallery of characters. The orchestration surpasses anything he had previously written for subtlety and dramatic verve. The Csárdás foreshadows the splendours of his other great operetta *The Gypsy Baron* with its truly Hungarian spirit. At a ball in Orlofsky's palace, Rosalinda, disguised as a Hungarian countess, reassures the company's doubts about her identity by singing a fiery Csárdás.

BIZET — Carmen

Jack O'Kelly and Gentlemen of the Chorus — *Toreador Song*

Today, *Carmen* has the reputation of being the most popular opera in the world. However, it was a failure on its first performance. The savage passion and the highly sensual music had a disagreeable effect on the audience. Only gradually was recognition given to the quality of the sensitive and powerful music and then quite suddenly *Carmen* became a worldwide success. Bizet did not live to enjoy his work's triumph, for he died three months after the work's first performance, which had taken place on the 3rd March 1875 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. In the second act the torero, Escamillo, sings his rousing account of the thrills of the bull-ring.

TCHAIKOVSKY — Eugene Onegin

Ladies of the Chorus — *Harvesters Chorus*

Tchaikovsky's international fame was based on his symphonic works while his operas remained relatively little-known. The most important of these, *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades* only gradually established themselves outside Russia and the fact that these two operas are being more and more performed demonstrates a growing interest in his operas despite unjust prejudice against them on the grounds that they lack dramatic force. Tchaikovsky took most of his libretto for *Eugene Onegin* direct from Pushkin and gave his opera the sub-title 'Lyrical Scenes' to indicate the rather loose connection between the various incidents. In the third scene of Act I, peasant girls sing a delightful chorus while gathering berries in the garden. It provides a most poignant counterpoint to the turmoil within Tatiana, who has written to Onegin, pouring out her heart to him and is now awaiting his response.

PUCCINI — *La Bohème*

Paul Kelly, Jack O'Kelly — *O Mimi, tu più non torni*

Mary Clarke — *Quando Me'n vo*

Mary Clarke, Cathering Smith, Paul Kelly, Jack O'Kelly — *Quartet*

Puccini's *La Bohème* was at first a comparative failure. Only after its third production in Palermo in 1896 were its merits fully recognised. It has become his most popular opera and one of the most popular works in the Italian repertory, and today, aged over 90 years, it retains its perennial youthfulness. Four Bohemians share a Paris attic: Rodolfo, a poet: the painter Marcello: the musician Schaunard and the philosopher Colline. Rodolfo meets a neighbour, Mimi, and they fall in love; at the same time Marcello recovers his old love, Musetta, from a wealthy admirer, but the relationship of both couples develops stormily, and the Bohemians resume their studio life. Mimi, dying of consumption, is brought in by Musetta. They try to save her, but it is too late.

In Act 4, Rodolfo and Marcello are trying to work. They pretend to be quite unconcerned about the present whereabouts of their previous loves, but Rodolfo keeps looking at Mimi's pink bonnet, and Marcello finds that whatever he wants to paint his brush produces Musetta's face.

The climax of Act 2 is Musetta's dramatic waltz-song in which she explains how everyone is attracted by her beauty and challenges Marcello to resist her.

In Act 3, unable to part immediately, Rodolfo and Mimi agree to stay together until the spring comes. A quarrel has just broken out between Marcello and Musetta which contrasts strongly with these tender expressions of love. Musetta cannot and will not be faithful to Marcello and again abandons her jealous lover.

VERDI — *I Lombardi*

Full Chorus — *Crusaders Chorus*

Following the triumphant success of *Nabucco*, Verdi was offered a contract for his next work by the impresario Merelli, who had left blank the sum to be paid to him. Verdi was advised to ask for no more and no less than Bellini had received for *Norma* and thus the contract was signed for *I Lombardi alla prima Crociata*, his fourth opera which premiered at La Scala, Milan, on 11th February 1843. The opera tells of the rivalry of two brothers for the love of the same woman. The famous Pilgrims' Chorus, plainly intended as a successor to *Va Pensiero* in *Nabucco* opens the second scene in Act 4. It is set in the Lombard encampment near Jerusalem where the crusaders and pilgrims depressed and downhearted, are reproaching the Lord for having called them from the green and fertile plains of Lombardy to this waterless desert.

Interval

PART II

VERDI — *Il Trovatore*

Full Chorus — *Anvil Chorus*

Il Trovatore was for a long time Verdi's most popular opera. After he had written *Rigoletto*, Verdi said he did not believe he would ever write anything so beautiful again, but subsequent to that disproved his opinion by the triumphant success of *Trovatore* which surpassed even that of *Rigoletto*. Although the story is exceptionally confusing, it inspired the composer's genius and the passion of the score is so convincing that one forgives the textual short-comings. The second act, which is set in the gypsy camp on the slopes of a mountain in Biscay, opens with the gypsies greeting the new day with their praises of work, wine and women.

VERDI — *Ernani*

Andrew Murphy — *Infelice*

Ernani is the fifth of Verdi's works and the first to bring him international fame. Since its premiere in Venice on the 9th March 1844 it has had a long, honourable and spasmodic career in the opera houses of the world. Elvira is probably the only heroine in all opera with three men in love with her. The bandit chief, Ernani, Don Carlo (who is in reality Charles I of Spain) and Don Ruy Gomez da Silva, a Spanish grandee, to whom she is betrothed. In the second scene of Act 1, Silva, having surprised both Ernani and Don Carlo in Elvira's apartments, reflects bitterly on his offended sense of honour.

WAGNER — *The Flying Dutchman*

Ladies of the Chorus — *Spinning Chorus*

In the summer of 1839 the ship bringing Wagner from Königsberg to London was caught in a terrible storm and flung onto the Scandinavian coast. The dazzling light of the tempest and the roar of the sea made a deep impression on Wagner, conjuring up an image of the condemned Dutchman aboard his spectral ship sailing the seven seas in a desperate search for salvation. The fable of the Flying Dutchman was a traditional tale from the 15th century among sailors of the Norse. Wagner wrote the libretto in Paris in 1841 and completed the music in the spring of 1842. The opera received its first performance in Dresden on 2nd January 1843. The second act is set in a room in the Norwegian captain Daland's house. The act opens with the serenely graceful and utterly feminine Spinning Chorus.

DONIZETTI — *La Favorita*

Marie Walsh — *O Mio Fernando*

Following its successful premiere in Paris in 1840 Donizetti's *La Favorita* took the operatic world by storm and was one of the most popular works in the entire 19th century repertoire, receiving over 600 performances at the Paris Opera, before the turn of the century. Set in 14th century Spain, it tells of the unhappy love of Fernando, a novice in the Monastery of St. James, for Leonora de Gusman, mistress of Alfonso XI, King of Castile. Leonora's magnificent aria occurs in Act 3 of the opera, where she sings of her love for Fernando.

VERDI — *Rigoletto*

Mary Clarke, Marie Walsh, Paul Kelly, Jack O'Kelly — *Quartet*

The first performance of *Rigoletto* took place on 11th March 1851 and was greeted with wild enthusiasm. Perhaps the most popular of Verdi's operas, *Rigoletto* tells of the hunchbacked jester, embittered by his life in the service of the dissolute Duke of Mantua. As the story unfolds he unwittingly brings about the abduction and death of his daughter Gilda, his only love. The great quartet of the last act brings together the various characters, and defines each of them with individual tunes appropriate to their nature, feelings and attitudes. The Duke of Mantua and his lustful desires, the cool, detached yet enticing jests of Maddalena, Gilda's despair, and Rigoletto's brooding revenge. It is an outstanding example of Verdi's ability to contrast conflicting emotions in a single piece of music.

BORODIN — *Prince Igor*

Full Chorus — *Polovtsian Dances*

Borodin worked on *Prince Igor* from 1869 until his death, when it was left unfinished. The opera was prepared for publication by Rimsky-Korsakov and first produced in St. Petersburg on 4th November 1890. It tells of the capture of Prince Igor and his son Vladimir by the Polovtsians, led by Khan Konchak who entertain their captives like royal guests, treating them to a display of Oriental dances. It was the Polovtsian dances which attracted an interest in Borodin's work, since the Diaghilev Russian Ballet, successfully touring Western Europe at the beginning of the century made them one of the principal attractions of their programme.



Dublin Grand Opera Society Chorus

A dedicated team, trained by professionals to work with professionals. Do you have the vocal skills to be a part of this dedicated team? The chorus is increasing its numbers for the Winter Season 1986. Should you wish to audition please contact:

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